

SUPPORT THE BITKOVs

HELP TO END THE TORTURE OF THE BITKOV FAMILY



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8 June 2021

Honorable Co-Chairs of Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,
United States Congress

Congressman Christopher H. Smith,

Congressman James P. McGovern,

5100 O'Neill House Office Building
200 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20515
United States of America

Persecution of the Bitkov family by the Russian state in Guatemala

The Bitkov family needs your help. Igor, Irina and Anastasia Bitkov have experienced a shocking miscarriage of justice in Guatemala. In 2009, they fled persecution from Russian Government and came to Guatemala where they hired a local law firm to help them apply for citizenship. It turned out that there were anomalies in the official documents issued to the Bitkovs by the Guatemalan Government. For possessing these documents Igor received a 19-year sentence (reduced to 7 years after a re-trial). Irina and Anastasia were given 14-year sentences. The Appeals Court recently upheld Irina's and Anastasia's sentences.

The Bitkovs are victims of corrupt practices in Russia that have been exported to Guatemala. There is clear evidence showing that the Russian state has interfered with the judicial system of Guatemala to falsely accuse and convict Bitkov family. The Bitkovs have been unable to assert their rights since the investigators and judges are part of a mafia system intent on

covering up its own crimes. The Bitkovs have bravely investigated and made public many acts of corruption in Guatemala implicating their persecutors.

In response to evidence presented at a hearing of The U.S. Helsinki Commission in Washington D.C. on 27th of April 2018, members of the Commission expressed outrage at the treatment of the Bitkovs. The hearing led to the suspension of U.S. financing of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). This UN-sponsored body supported by several western governments had abused its powers and violated Guatemalan law by acting as a co-prosecutor of the Bitkovs.

Since the end of CICIG's mandate in September last year, the Anti-Impunity Unit (FECI) in the Attorney General's Office has continued the persecution of the Bitkovs. The Head of FECI, Juan Francisco Sandoval, and a group of judges seem to be protecting a transnational crime ring that represents a threat to international security. As part of the legal defense, the Bitkov family has made several official complaints about the crime ring, including against Juan Francisco Sandoval, Judge Erika Aifan and other officials. They have done so at a considerable personal risk. A key witness in the case against Juan Francisco Sandoval was recently shot dead.

Guatemala's National Commission Against Torture found Judge Erika Aifan guilty of torturing Igor Bitkov for violation of the rules of treatment of prisoners and for abuse of preventive prison. She illegally sent the Bitkovs to trial even though the Constitutional Court granted them Constitutional Protection.

We attach the petition to U.S Senate, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Department of State which was published on Change.org; it's called "Save the Bitkov family from persecution of Russian government". <https://www.change.org/p/guatemalan-government-save-the-bitkov-family-from-persecution-of-russian-government>. The following movements and institutions show their support: Freedom, Guatemala Inmortal, Liga ProPatria, Asociacion de Mujeres Conservadoras de Guatemala, Torre de Oracion, Pro Familia, Save the Bitkov Family. The petition is currently signed by 4321 individuals.

Please help the Bitkovs to achieve justice.

We will be pleased to answer any questions and to provide supporting evidence.

Yours sincerely,

John Lough on behalf of the Support the Bitkovs team.



